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ABSTRACT

This paper begins by discussing a National Institute of Education report (NIE, 1984) which was compiled by the study group on the conditions of excellence in American higher education and which focused on student involvement, higher expectations, and assessment and feedback. The NIE report is presented as a framework which academic professionals can use to evaluate and develop programs to enhance the quality of undergraduate education. The roles of student affairs professionals in contributing to quality education are highlighted and principles of student involvement and assessment and how they are being implemented into practice through student development programs are discussed. A new theory of Student Involvement (Astin, 1985) is presented and three theories of student learning (content, resource, and individualized) are examined. A possible assessment approach which could be used by professionals to evaluate the contributions made by student affairs programs and by the quality of student involvement to the overall education of undergraduates is presented. A section on implementation of the principles identifies six developmental needs of students and reviews the ways that various student affairs programs attempt to meet those needs. A final section addresses the issue of value addedness, the positive difference that an educational experience makes in a student's knowledge, attitudes, and skills. The value added program at Northeast Missouri State University is described. Thirty-four references are provided (NB)

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Involvement in Learning: The Role of Student Affairs Professionals

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The Ohio State University

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In 1984, the National Institute of Education released a report, Involvement in Learning: Realizing the Potential of American Higher Education, compiled by the study group on the conditions of excellence in American Higher Education. The study group made several recommendations to improve the quality of undergraduate education. The focus is on three conditions the authors believe to be critical to this endeavor: student involvement, higher expectations, and assessment and feedback.

Student Involvement is highlighted as the most important condition. It is defined as the time, energy, and effort students devote to the learning process. (NIE, p. 17).

> "There is now a good deal of research evidence to suggest that the more time and effort students invest in the learning process and the more intensely they engage in their own education, the greater will be their growth and achievement, their satisfaction with their educational experiences, and their persistence in college, and the more likely they are to continue their learning." (NIE, p. 17.).

The two principles which frame the study group's recommendations, in general, specifically serve to support the view that student involvement is a critical factor in the development of quality education.

1. The amount of student learning and personal development associated with any educational program is directly

proportional to the quality of student involvement in that program.

2. The effectiveness of any educational policy and practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase student involvement in learning. (NIE, p. 19).

The second major condition required is the raise expectations of both students and professionals within institutions. These expectations include graduation requirements and standards of learning. The authors believe, "learning is enhanced when both expectations and standards are clear, and when they are actually shared by both professionals and students." (NIE, p. 20).

The final condition necessary for an improvement is the quality of education is the regular and periodic assessment and feedback. According to the report, "The use of assessment information to redirect effort is an essential ingredient in effective learning and serves as a powerful level for involvement." (NIE, p. 21).

The Report is being discussed as a framework academic professionals can use to evaluate and develop programs intended to enhance the quality of undergraduate education. Simultaneously, non-teaching professionals are being challenged to clarify the contributions of their programs to the intellectual development and educational involvement of students. Most of us would agree that a student's experience in colleges and universities are affected by the quality of the environment and the student's involvement within it. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the opportunities available to Student Affairs professionals

to make major contributions to the enhancement of the environment through an understanding and implementation of student development theory and practices. We will discuss the principles of student involvement and assessment and how they are being implemented into practice through student development programs. We will discuss a possible assessment approach which could be used by professionals to evaluate the contributions of Student Affairs programs and the quality of student involvement to the overall education of undergraduates. And finally, participants are encouraged to share programs from their campus to highlight the diversity and richness of the contributions.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Howard Bowen (1977) in his book Investment in Learning defines learning as "knowing and interpreting the know (scholarship and criticism), discovering the new (research and related activities), and bringing about desired change in the cognitive and affective traits and characteristics of human beings (education)." p. 5.

Using Bowen's definition of learning, student involvement can be measured by the amount of time, energy, and effort students devote to the learning process. (NIE, p. 17).

The impact that student involvement can have on a student learning outcomes can be defined as value addedness. Value addedness represents the difference between a student's potential for success in work and

future education at the time of entry to college and the actual student outcomes attained as a result of involvement in the educational process. (Skinner and Tafel, 1986).

Student Involvement

Alexander Astin, director of the Higher Education Research Institute of UCLA, (Astin, 1985) has developed a new theory of Student Involvement which he believes is the key to effective education. Astin developed the theory after being dissatisfied with current modes of teaching: the content, the resource, and the individualized theories (Astin, 1985). Astin was dissatisfied with these modes because of their tendency to treat students as a kind of black box. The input side of the black box is the policies and programs of a college or university, and the output end is the various types of achievement measures such as grade-point average or scores on a standardized test. What is missing in these modes is the mediating mechanism that explains how these educational programs and policies are translated into student achievement and development. (Astin, p. 137) Astin's theory of student involvement is intended to provide a framework useful for understanding the process of student learning.

To understand the importance of this theory of student involvement, one must examine the three current theories of student learning: content, resource, and individualized.

Content theory or subject matter theory is based on the principle that knowledgeable faculty members will expose students to the right subject matter. Students acquire knowledge by attending lectures, completing reading assignments, and conducting library research.

The content theory assigns students to a passive role. "Knowledgeable professors lecture the ignorant student so that the student can acquire the same knowledge." (Astin, 1985, p. 138). This approach has been most successful with highly motivated students who have good reading and listening skills. Slower readers or less motivated students, however, have not been as successful.

The second approach, resource theory, is implemented in institutions that emphasize the acquisition of resources to achieve institutional excellence and learning. Under this theory, physical facilities, human resources and monetary resources are obtained. If adequate resources are "brought together in one place, student learning and development will occur." (Astin, 1985, p. 138).

There are two limitations in the resource theory. The first is when institutions over invested energies in obtaining a finite quantity of resources. The second limitation is the tendency of institutions to focus on more attention on the acquisition of resources than on creative uses of current resources.

Individualized theory, developed by developmental and learning psychologists, assumes "that no single approach to subject matter, teaching techniques, or resource allocation is adequate for all students." (Astin, 1985, p. 140).

The individualized theory is similar to self-paced instruction, contact learning, and individualized study. Few colleges have used this approach. Individualized instruction is expensive and there is still not enough known on which approaches work best with which types of students.

In contrast, the theory of student involvement emphasizes the need for educators to "focus less on what they do and more on what they student does: how motivated the student is, how much time and energy the student devotes to the learning process." (Astin, 1985, p. 142). Unlike content and resource theories which favor well prepared students who are motivated and assertive, the Student Involvement Theory provides a model for working with students who are passive and/or under-prepared. It provides a framework which helps to focus the institution's resources on a common objective, student learning. In addition, Astin (1985) claims the theory of student involvement differs from theories of student development. Theories of student development focus on developmental outcomes. Student involvement focuses on the process of development.

Astin (1985, p. 151) states, "If an institution commits itself to maximizing student involvement, counselors and other student personnel workers will probably occupy a central role in institutional perceptions." Student personnel professionals in general, are in a unique position of having direct contact with students, enabling them to monitor individual student involvement in their educational process. Astin believes one of the challenges to student personnel professionals is "to find a hook that will get students more involved in the college

experience: by taking a different array of courses, by changing residential situations, by joining student organizations or participating in various kinds of extra curricular activities, or by associating with new peer groups." (p. 151). The theory of student involvement assigns a major role to student affairs professionals, in the learning process.

Assessment

It is important that we begin this section with a definition of assessment, as it will be used in this paper. This is necessary because of the variety of interpretations that have been assigned to this process. For some it is restricted to a testing program; while other interpretations result only in the terminal step of evaluation. In addition, it is not uncommon for the professional staff to be assigned full responsibility for assessment designed to better understand individuals, groups, or organizations (Miller and Prince, 1977). According to Miller and Prince (1977), assessment that is viewed too narrowly may not promote the development of students (p. 47). Brown (1972) points out that, for many students, assessment only occurs at the time they are admitted to college or when they choose an academic major. And Parker (1973) has highlighted the need for assessment procedures that measure progress toward well-defined educational objectives and can be used by the faculty.

In essence it is necessary that we develop and implement assessment programs that meet a number of criteria in order to most fully

contribute to the development of students. From our perspective, the following criteria are minimally necessary:

1. Assessments of quality educational programs must be broad enough to consider both individual abilities and the environmental context.
2. Assessments must occur periodically and regularly during the collegiate experience.
3. Assessments must be utilized, in a manner consistent with organizational missions and goals, to determine progress and, if necessary, modify implementation.

Given these considerations, we believe the definition of assessment used by Miller and Prince (1977) is most appropriate for this paper.

> "Assessment for student development, then, is the process through which students, groups, and organizations systematically acquire and use data from a variety of sources to describe, appraise, and modify their own development." (p. 47).

Miller and Prince point out that the object of assessment for student development is to "help students understand their current patterns of behavior, emphasizing positively the specific skills they have instead of the ones they lack." (p. 48). They go on to state that assessment programs must be designed <u>with</u> students rather than for or about them. Because they so closely integrate the process of assessment with student development, their definition is supportive of the recommendations outlined in the NIE Report.

In addition, the six process steps Miller and Prince outline for assessing student growth can also be effectively applied to an evaluation of Student Affairs programs more generally.[1]

1. The student's needs are diagnosed
   (The group/environmental needs are diagnosed);

2. Goals are determined;

3. The student's current level of achievement on a goal-oriented continuum is specified so that appropriate objectives can be established

   (The group/department's current level of progress on a goal-oriented continuum is specified so that appropriate objectives can be established);

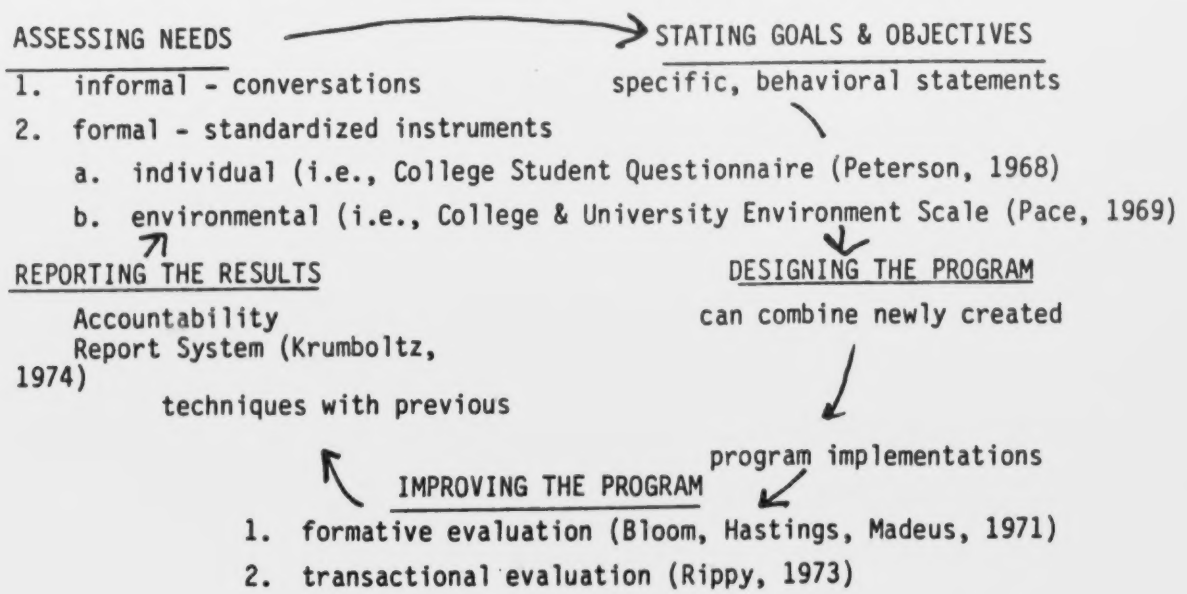
4. The strategies needed to achieve the desired goals are outlined;

5. The student's performance is continually assessed throughout the implementation period

   The group/department's progress is continually assessed throughout the implementation period); and

6. Movement toward or attainment of goals is evaluated.

"Since the final step can also serve as diagnostic assessment, the process begins once more, continuously moving toward more advanced


ASSESSING NEEDS
1. informal - conversations
2. formal - standardized instruments
a. individual (i.e., College Student Questionnaire (Peterson, 1968)
b. environmental (i.e., College & University Environment Scale (Pace, 1969)
STATING GOALS & OBJECTIVES
specific, behavioral statements
DESIGNING THE PROGRAM
can combine newly created
program implementations
IMPROVING THE PROGRAM
1. formative evaluation (Bloom, Hastings, Madeus, 1971)
2. transactional evaluation (Rippy, 1973)
REPORTING THE RESULTS
Accountability
Report System (Krumboltz, 1974)
techniques with previous

There are additional considerations that must be made when contemplating programmatic assessment and evaluation.

1. Programs should be based on student development theory that has been made concrete by assessing student needs. Evaluations should test the theory.
2. The evaluation should test the implementation plans. Was the correct department, division, task team, individual, or combination assigned to produce the desired outcome? Was the correct student population selected? Were the strategies based on a correct interpretation of the assessment of needs?
3. The evaluation should test the implementation tactics. Did the process achieve its objectives?
4. The evaluation should test the staff's effectiveness. Were the people with the best abilities chosen or were people assigned because of their role in the organization?
5. The evaluation should test for goal-outcome fit. The evaluation should state whether or not the program's results represent achievement of the stated goal. If such a statement cannot be made then the evaluation procedures were inadequate

or the goals were ill-defined.

6. Did staff members, faculty members and students collaborate significantly in planning and implementing the program? (Miller and Prince, 1977)

7. Are program goals consistent with institutional goals?
8. Is the program realizeable within resource constraints? (Stimpson and Simon, 1974)

In addition to addressing such internal criteria, evaluations serve as an accountability check for the larger public. Such systems help to facilitate decision making (Krumboltz, 1974).

In conclusion, programmatic evaluations conducted in this manner reflect the spirit of the recommendations for assessment and feedback outlined in the NIE Report. As those authors point out, "higher education should ensure that the mounds of data already collected on students are converted into useful information and fed back in ways that enhance student learning and lead to improvement in programs, teaching practices, and the environment in which teaching and learning take place." (NIE, p.21).

NOTES:

1Statements noted in parentheses represent our extrapolation from the individual to the programmatic level.

Chapter III

Practice: Implementation of the Principles

Programs

According to Noel and Saluri (1983), "successful general education programs extend beyond the classroom attending to both the affective and the cognitive needs of students" and encompassing a variety of services (p. 11-12). Further, Noel and Lenitz (1982) have pointed out that providing effective and efficient academic and personal/social support systems enables institutions to maintain the integrity of academic standards and at the same time make certain that academically underprepared students are prepared to successfully meet those standards (p. 1). It is quite clear, therefore, that student affairs professionals have the opportunity--indeed, responsibility--to make a positive and proactive contribution to student learning, through program design and implementation. Programs should be attractive and interesting to students. In addition, because students talk about their college experiences as a series of events rather than psychological or sociological processes, it is useful to develop programs and activities based on a student development model (Upcraft, 1985).

Upcraft, Finney, and Garland (1984) identify six major developmental issues that students must resolve during their college years:

1. developing intellectual and academic competence;

2. establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships;
3. developing a sex-role identity and sexuality;
4. deciding on a career and life-style;
5. maintaining personal health and wellness; and
6. formulating an integrated philosophy of life.

A variety of programs can be designed to meet these developmental needs. Evidence of these programs can be found in most student affairs literature and operations. More importantly, however, evidence exists to document the positive contributions of these programs. For example, Astin (1973) found that students living in residence halls

1. "exceed the learning and personal development predicted when their advantages in ability, prior education, extracurricular activities, and community and family backgrounds are considered;
2. are more fully involved in academic and extracurricular activities with other students; and
3. earn higher grade point averages, even when differences in ability are taken into account."

Astin (1977) also concluded that the most important environmental characteristic associated with finishing college was living in the residence hall during the freshmen year. And he noted that students living in residence halls express more satisfaction with their undergraduate experience than commuters.

A good deal of research has focused on what students remain in academic institutions (Astin, 1975; Noel, 1978). Yet colleges and universities have not made sufficient progress in relating this

information to who is recruited and why (Ihlanfeldt, 1985). In a recent book, Increasing Student Retention, edited by Noel, Lenitz, Saluri and Asssociates, William Ihlanfeldt outlines a methodology by which colleges and universities can improve their enrollment and revenue bases through market research and price and student analyses (pp. 183-201).

Research has shown that students who receive financial aid (Bergen, Upham, and Bergen, 1970; Astin, 1975) are more likely to persist toward graduation than are non-recipients. Many institutions have been supporting this notion and increasing access and diversity by using more of their unrestricted general funds to provide need-based grant aid to qualified but needy students (Gomberg and Atelsek, 1979).

Orientation programs take on a variety of formats, from one-day summer sessions to semester long courses. One goal of most orientation programs is to define the role of higher education in life preparation (Shaffer, 1962). The orientation course format, in particular, reflects the "developmental approach to meeting student needs, allowing presentation or reiteration of information as needs arise or as other developmental activities reinforce it" (Titley, 1985, p. 227).

Moreover, Titley (1985) points out that participation in orientation programs can help to develop more positive feelings toward learning (Reiter, 1964); more interest in non-classroom activities (Chandler, 1972); a better understanding of academic expectations (Cole and Ivey, 1967); and a clearer understanding of the role of a student (Rising, 1967).

When reviewing programs, it is also important to note that some academic advising, learning assistance, and career planning programs

fall under the Student Affairs, as well as, or instead of the Academic Affairs divisions of colleges and universities. The contributions of these programs to reductions in attrition have been documented by a variety of sources (Beal and Noel, 1980).

VALUE ADDEDNESS

Value added (Northeast Missouri State University,(1984) refers to the positive difference that an educational experience makes in a student's knowledge, attitude, and skills. The value added approach proides a mechanism which institutions can use to determine quality by focusing on student learning outputs as related to input potential. Value addedness can be used as an evaluation model to help institutions show that their educational programs make a difference.

Northeast Missouri State University began an across the board value added program in 1974. The institution had the commitment of the entire academic community, faculty, students, adminstrators, and staff. The program was built on the assumption that student growth is influenced by the entire institution. Northeast Missouri discovered that each point of contact for students, residence halls, register, placement, ect. was a potential source of influence on the student's development. "Academic and intellectual growth may be measured through batteries of standardized pretests and posttests. Of additional importance, however, is the ability of the institution to demonstrate to the student that it helps to cause this growth through help in areas traditionally viewed as non-academic." (Northeast Missouri State University, p.20)

Northeast Missouri State University used a series of standardized tests (ACT,GRE,NTE,GMAT) to measure student outcomes of value added programs. The university also uses a biannual comprehensive interest survey that measures students' satisfaction with programs, services, facilities, and environments. The Student Affairs Staff traditionally did not use " widely accepted measures of value- such as GPA, classwork, and test scores" (Northeast State University, p21). Student Affairs professionals had to use more creative methods such as the ACT Student Opinion Survey which measures a general level of satisfaction with services and programs.

"The most effective measurements, however, of Support Services Value-Added Programs are those that creatively use the widley accepted academic indictors such as GPA and test scores. Everyone, but especially faculty, understand what is being said about results and can interpret them without wading through jargon."(Northeast Missouri State University,1984). Northeast Missouri State University value added approach emphasized the use of qualitative assessments to evaluate student change and provide information which allowed the institution to see how its programs influnced students' development.

The evaluation of the value added program in student affairs at Northeast Missouri State University showed in 1984 on-campus freshmen had a .24 higher cumulative GPA than off-campus freshmen. Greek organizations help to increase leadership skills and individual goal achievement. As institutions seek ways to involve students in their

education and to increase the quality of that education, educators may need to take a value added approach to education.

As stated by Northeast Missouri State University (1984) " the true quality resides in the institution's ability to affect its students favorably to make a positive difference in their intellectual and personal development, the highest quality institutions, in this view, are those that have the greatest impact and add the most value to the student's knowledge, personality, and career development."

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